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Chairman: Mr. Galuška ..... (Czech Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/54/98, 265, 411, 419 and 430)

1. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing his report in document A/54/430, said that, during his visits to several countries, including Sri Lanka, Burundi, the Sudan, India and Sierra Leone, parties to conflicts had committed themselves to a number of measures, including not targeting civilian populations, not blocking access to populations in distress, not interfering with the distribution of relief supplies, observing humanitarian ceasefires, not attacking schools or hospitals, not using landmines and not recruiting or using children as child soldiers. Governments, the Security Council, regional organizations, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations must reinforce those commitments through their own channels of communication and influence.

2. The protection and welfare of children should be part of all negotiations to end war and should be included in peace accords. In his recent visits to Burundi, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Colombia, Governments and insurgency groups had agreed to place that issue on the agendas of the peace processes currently under way in their countries. Furthermore, the key actors responsible for designing post-conflict peace-building programmes should make the needs of children a central concern from the outset in their planning, programming and resource allocation. The protection and welfare of children should also become a clear priority in all United Nations mandated peace operations.

3. To achieve that, the protection and rehabilitation of children must be specifically incorporated into the mandates of peacekeeping operations; and a senior child-protection advocate should always be attached to each operation. Appropriate training must be given to peacekeeping personnel concerning the protection of the rights of children and women. He was pleased to report that those new elements had been incorporated into the mandate and staffing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), and that he was working to set up similar arrangements for the peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and East Timor.

4. In order to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, he strongly supported raising the age limit for their recruitment and participation from 15 to 18. There was an urgent need to place international pressure immediately on armed groups that were currently abusing children as combatants. In addition, it was important to address the political, social and economic factors that created an environment facilitating the exploitation of children in that way. Programmes must be set up to rehabilitate and reintegrate child soldiers to prevent them from being further exploited. He urgently appealed to all States to cooperate actively to conclude, by January 2000, the work on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflict, which would focus action on the urgent task of curbing child soldiering.

5. Local capacities for protecting children affected by armed conflict must be built and strengthened. He had advocated a number of initiatives in that connection, including the establishment of national commissions for children to ensure that their welfare was a major priority in the aftermath of conflict, the formation of informal groups of elders and statesmen to serve as local advocates for that issue, and the setting up of parliamentary caucuses for the protection of children. He had made it a particular priority to ensure that the protection of children affected by armed conflict was a major concern of the Security Council, and he continued to encourage deeper engagement of the Council in that regard.

6. The adoption of Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) was an important milestone in promoting the cause of children affected by armed conflict. The resolution demonstrated the Council's commitment to protect those children, set forth important measures for protecting and ensuring the welfare of children during and after armed conflict and made that issue an important question that legitimately belonged on the Council's agenda. He called upon all concerned to make full use of that new advocacy tool and encouraged the Security Council to apply the measures set forth in the resolution in its future consideration of specific crisis situations and in mandating peacekeeping operations.

7. Over the past year, he had made it a priority to establish strong cooperation with the European Union and its institutions in order to encourage the Union to make the protection of children affected by armed conflict a significant aspect of its own agenda. Communities of faith also had a crucial r .le to play in that regard through their advocacy and work in the field. Religious leaders and institutions should use their moral influence and presence within communities to promote the protection of children and women. He had developed a framework of cooperation with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and had held

consultations with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to explore possibilities for future collaboration. In addition, the international business community should assume its social and corporate responsibility in that regard and refrain from conducting business that fuelled war machines. As a start, they should adopt voluntary codes of conflict within their own industries to address that serious issue.

8. The time had come for the international community to launch an "era of application" in order to apply international norms and standards. Over the past 50 years, a truly impressive body of international humanitarian and human rights instruments had been developed. The impact of those instruments, however, remained woefully inadequate in the field. Energy must be focused on ensuring their practical application and compliance with them. That could be done only if the international community was prepared to employ its considerable collective influence to that end.

9. Local value systems that traditionally provided ethical bearings in many societies must not be cast aside. In most societies, distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable practices were maintained, with taboos and injunctions proscribing the targeting of civilian populations, especially children and women. Everything must be done to reassert the values and taboos that had traditionally been instrumental in protecting children and women in time of conflict. The mainstay of that effort must be the local community, through community-based initiatives.

10. In discussions with Governments and through public advocacy, he had mobilized support for the signing and ratification of new international legal instruments that provided for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in June 1998, provided for jurisdiction over several child-specific crimes. The main responsibility for developing operational programmes to promote the protection and welfare of children lay with the operational agencies and bodies that had the resources, expertise and field presence. He had invested a great deal of time and energy in building a framework of collaboration with his office's key partners within the United Nations system. Delegations had a very important role to play in making collaboration a serious exercise through their activities at various levels and by conveying a consistent message on that issue. He hoped that the work of delegations, operational United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in that field would result in a self-sustaining critical mass of activities and heightened awareness at all levels.

11. There was a need to seek to respond to all the dimensions of the suffering and victimization of children in armed conflict. In order to maintain credibility and solidarity, the international community must be seen to be responding with the same level of concern wherever children were in need of protection and support and must not allow itself to regard as normal a phenomenon that represented a radical departure from the fundamental norms of conduct in all societies. On the eve of the new millennium, the international community must resolve to make the world safe for all children.

12. **Ms. Calcetas-Santos** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography), introducing her report in document A/54/411, said that her country visit to Guatemala in July 1999 had confirmed her earlier perception that the definition of "sale" that was currently being considered by the working group on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography should include all instances of sale and should not be limited to sale for commercial sexual exploitation. International adoption procedures in Guatemala were rife with legal loopholes and abuses that allowed for the almost free trade of children for adoption. She expressed thanks to the Government of Guatemala for its candour in discussing the contributory factors giving rise to that problem and its commitment to carry out immediate reforms.

13. Her forthcoming report to the Commission on Human Rights would focus on the relationship between domestic violence, abuse and neglect and the use of children in prostitution and/or pornography. The effect of domestic violence on children had not been extensively researched. There were hardly any disaggregated data on the age and gender of children subjected to domestic violence. Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child sought to provide children with the broadest range of protection against any kind of domestic violence, abuse and neglect. Under that article, Governments were charged with protecting children against neglect and abuse by parents or other persons who cared for them. It was not difficult to imagine the link between abuse in the home situation and commercial sexual exploitation. Sexual and other kinds of abuse were usually the main reasons why children ran away from home. Domestic violence also gave rise to other equally strong factors linked to prostitution and pornography, such as drug and alcohol abuse.

14. In September 1999, she had made a country visit to Fiji, following reports that that country and other Pacific islands were becoming popular alternative destinations for child-sex tourists, particularly in view of the more stringent

preventive measures in other countries in the region. The Fiji situation was proof of the contagious nature of the affliction besetting children in the field of commercial sexual exploitation. Reports from both governmental and non-governmental agencies confirmed the fact that children were being victimized by local and tourist clients.

15. One particular case involved an Australian resident, who had been found to have thousands of pornographic pictures of children, including Fijian children, three of whom were still staying with him. The involvement of children in commercial sex was evident from the existence of high-risk indicators, such as the growing number of street children, the high rate of drug and alcohol abuse by children, the growing number of reported cases of family abuse, the influx of tourists and the general lack of awareness of the problem.

16. It was very regrettable that the Government of Fiji had not shown any willingness to recognize the fact that the country could no longer ignore that issue. That was evident from the failure and/or refusal of the ministers of crucial departments responsible for protecting children to meet with her in spite of her specific requests. The report on her visit to Fiji would be submitted to the Commission on Human Rights in 2000, and she hoped to engage in a substantive dialogue with the Government of Fiji on that occasion. Lastly, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was very sobering to note that unabated rampant violation of children's rights in the areas falling within her mandate still persisted all over the world. Efforts must continue to ensure that children were not damaged beyond salvation.

17. **Mr. Somavia** (Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that some 250 million children under the age of 14 worked for a living, with 60 million engaged in abhorrent forms of labour. Theirs was a voice which could no longer be ignored. The unanimous adoption on 17 June 1999 of ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour represented a major contribution to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. The recent Global March against child labour had further demonstrated the global consensus on the importance of eliminating certain forms of child labour. One country, the Seychelles, had already ratified the new instrument, and ILO, meanwhile, had launched a global ratification campaign. Although the highly complex and sensitive issue of child labour was not restricted to developing countries, it was intrinsically linked to the issue of development. It was primarily poverty and parental unemployment which kept children from attending school.

19. As the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) had shown, the elimination of child labour was not an impossible dream. Initiated by ILO in 1992, the programme had been instrumental in providing sustainable alternatives to child labour in specific cases throughout the world. In Tanzania, some 4,500 girls had been withdrawn from domestic work; in Nepal, more than 4,000 children had been rescued from hazardous work, and the Government had been persuaded to make child labour and child trafficking national priorities; in Guatemala, 700 teachers had been trained to work with child quarry workers and alternatives had been provided to families; in the Russian Federation, a new IPEC project in St. Petersburg, where there were currently up to 30,000 working street children, aimed to withdraw up to 5,000 children from the street within three years.

20. With a view to reaching more children and promoting a sustainable commitment to the rights of the child at the national level, ILO was determined to enhance its collaboration with other partners, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Commission on Human Rights and the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly within the framework of their national poverty alleviation plans. Lastly, he urged the Committee to help mobilize political support for ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 182. The world's children deserved no less.

21. **Mr. N'diaye** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)) expressed strong support for the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At its three sessions in 1999, that Committee had considered seventeen country reports. In view of the considerable backlog of reports generated by the quasi-universal ratification of the Convention, it had decided to consider eight reports per session as of January 2000, with a view to increasing the number to nine. Also in order to enable the Committee on the Rights of the Child to better cope with the volume of work, it was to be hoped that the required number of States would approve the amendment to the Convention adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/107, which would increase the Committee's membership from ten to eighteen experts.

22. The working group on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had held its fifth session in 1999. The working group was currently considering the scope of the proposed optional protocol and discussing definitions, in particular that of the "sale of

children". Agreement had been reached on the need to criminalize child prostitution while protecting the children involved. The Commission on Human Rights had expressed the wish that the protocol be adopted by the year 2000; it was to be hoped that informal consultations would enable that deadline to be met.

23. The working group on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflict had held its fifth session in 1999. While still negotiating contentious issues such as the age limit for recruitment and participation in hostilities, the working group had reaffirmed its commitment to concluding its work in the year 2000.

24. **Ms. Bellamy** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had entered into public consciousness in an unprecedented manner, becoming the emblem of a global movement for the rights of children. Concerted action was required to intensify the momentum to mainstream concern for child rights throughout the United Nations. It was encouraging that agreements now existed to ensure legal safeguards in the process of inter-country adoption, fight impunity for war crimes committed against children and combat the scourge of landmines.

25. In regard to inter-agency collaboration, UNICEF would be supporting the call by ILO for the universal ratification of Convention No. 182. The Fund, through its country programmes, also actively supported the crucial work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, *inter alia* in the areas of law reform, institutional capacity-building, the collection of child-specific data and the promotion of a culture of respect for child rights, with the active participation of children. UNICEF also worked in close cooperation with UNHCHR, whose plan of action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was being implemented with increasing effectiveness.

26. Increasing numbers of countries were now incorporating the Convention into domestic law. It had been demonstrated that, even with limited resources, progress could be made towards creating an enabling environment where all rights of all children were respected, where children participated in all aspects of public life, and where their well-being was recognized as the principal indicator of human progress. Such progress depended primarily on political will.

27. Although much had been achieved in the short life of the Convention, many millions of children remained unaffected by the progress made. None of the anniversary events of 1999 could thus be characterized as a cause for celebration. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should, rather, be seen as "a cause for concerted action". It was impossible to ignore the fact that 650 million children were currently trapped in extreme poverty, struggling to survive on less than a dollar a day and that 32,000 children a day continued to die from totally preventable causes such as malnutrition, respiratory infections and malaria. Moreover, 130 million children in developing countries — two thirds of them girls — did not attend school, while 50 million children and women were victims of armed conflict, violence and exploitation.

28. The Convention on the Rights of the Child called for international solidarity for the promotion of child rights, yet in the decade since its adoption, assistance to the world's poorest countries had declined sharply. The worst effects were felt in those countries where under-five mortality was highest, where there was the least access to safe water, where women bore more than five children, and where more than one in five children were excluded from primary education. It was crucial that such trends be reversed.

29. A number of other factors further exacerbated the situation. Globalization was only increasing disparities between and within nations, with women and children being the most affected. The burden of foreign debt was one of the greatest obstacles to realizing the rights of the poorest: Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, devoted far more resources to servicing its debt than it did to promoting the health and education of its 300 million children. Children and women throughout the world had become the primary targets in war, hence the Fund's Peace and Security Agenda for Children. HIV/AIDS, too, was undermining the decade's achievements in child health and survival.

30. Despite a global economy worth nearly $30 million billion and breathtaking technological advances, an obscene gulf separated those who enjoyed the fruits of progress from those who did not with millions of children continuing to be denied their fundamental rights. It was imperative to begin to bridge that divide if a just and peaceful world was to be created.

31. UNICEF called on the global community to invest in future generations of children by ensuring that infants began life healthy and that young children were nurtured in a caring environment, that all children — including the poorest — had access to basic quality education; and that all adolescents developed fully and participated in shaping their societies. It seemed that a global consensus on those objectives was within reach, and that the world might finally be ready to alter the course of human development by

shifting national investments to favour the interests of children. The international community must seize the moment and mobilize support for a new global agenda for children in conjunction with the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. Such a cause required strong leadership from Governments, as well as the support of civil society and other partners.

32. **Mr. Rabuka** (Fiji), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, challenged the view expressed by Ms. Calcetas-Santos that Fiji was being used for the purposes of child sex tourism. It was necessary to be more specific about so-called "high-risk indicators", such as "the growing number of reported cases of family abuse" and the "influx of tourists". Mr. Mutch, the Australian in question, was a legitimate businessman, who had been in Fiji for years. Until proven guilty, Fiji's Constitution required that he be presumed innocent. Besides, even if the occasional tourist was caught committing an offence, that did not mean that all tourists came to Fiji for the purposes of sex tourism. Fiji, indeed, was aware of its obligations and its judiciary was conscious of the need to deal with children who had been exploited or raped, or who were victims of incest. Domestic legislation in place since 1998 penalized drug trafficking and money-laundering, as well as child abuse.

33. **Mr. Schalin** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Union fully supported the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and was impressed by the detailed reporting on his field visits to various countries. It would be interesting to know more about the preparations for such visits, cooperation with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the field, as well as monitoring and follow-up, especially with regard to the commitments made by the parties to conflicts. The European Union would also like to know how the Special Representative viewed his mandate and what the legacy of his current mandate would be.

34. Further information would be appreciated with regard to the rights-based approach to programming that UNICEF had adopted and on practical experience in that regard, including difficulties in changing attitudes within the Fund, on the part of other partners and at the country level. It would be interesting to know what the Fund's expectations were with regard to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. Further information would be appreciated concerning the UNICEF Internet Web page entitled "Making Children Count" and the division of labour in the field between the Fund and the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.

35. The European Union strongly supported the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The issue of the sexual exploitation of children was dealt with in many areas of the system. He asked the Special Rapporteur whether her work was being supported by other United Nations agencies such as UNHCR and to what extent she was able to use information provided by other actors in the system. The sexual exploitation of children in the family environment was of great concern to the European Union, which welcomed the Special Rapporteur's intention to focus on the causes of such exploitation in her next report to the Commission on Human Rights and would appreciate any preliminary observations on that question.

36. The Union believed that the only way to deal with the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet was effective international cooperation involving all relevant actors. Further information would be welcome with regard to the different ways Governments and other actors were addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the new information technologies and on concrete measures taken in that area. Lastly, he requested all the panel members to indicate what the greatest achievement had been in the area of protecting the rights of children during the past 10 years and what the greatest challenge would be in that regard in the future.

37. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that his delegation had followed with great interest the Special Representative's recent visit to West Africa, particularly Sierra Leone and Guinea, and would appreciate further information on the proposed pilot project for children in Sierra Leone.

38. **Mr. Boichenko** (Russian Federation) asked the Executive Director of UNICEF to give an assessment of the changes in the situation of children in Iraq since the publication of the Fund's report on that country in August 1999. It would also be interesting to learn her views and those of the Special Representative on sanctions in general and in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

39. **Ms. Alburquerque** (Portugal) requested the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to provide information on the impact of his activities as an advocate for children on the work of other actors in the field, including UNICEF, UNHCR and non-governmental organizations. Further information would also be appreciated with regard to the results of his visits to countries affected by armed conflict, particularly with regard to the commitments

undertaken by parties to conflicts and the system for assessing their observance. Her delegation would also like additional information on the Special Representative's specific initiatives in East Timor and cooperation with other actors in that regard. Lastly, it would be interesting to learn how the Executive Director of UNICEF viewed the Fund's work as the United Nations lead agency for children in terms of advocacy, policy dialogue and operational work.

40. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that answers to many of the questions raised could be found in his report in document A/54/430 and his introductory statement, which would be distributed to delegations. Preparations for a country visit began with long and intensive contacts with the United Nations country team, usually through the resident coordinator, in preparing the agenda, the issues to be raised and the programme to be carried out. At the same time, contacts were made with the headquarters of the agencies involved, usually UNICEF and UNHCR. An informal advisory group was convened, bringing together all the key partners. Messages were sent to United Nations agencies and departments, non-governmental organizations and Governments which had particular links with the country concerned, requesting their suggestions and input. That process required a great deal of time in order to draw up an agenda with a set of issues concerning a particular country.

41. His office was tiny and expended an enormous amount of time and energy contacting operational agencies and seeking their input and advice both at their headquarters and in the field. Collaboration within the United Nations system did not come about easily. It involved a lot of work on the part of all parties concerned. Delegations had a very important role to play in that regard by virtue of the positions which they put forward in various governing bodies and the message that they conveyed to the various actors concerning collaboration.

42. Like preparations for country visits, follow-up measures also entailed a lot of discussion with the operational agencies. Meetings were convened within the executive committees and informal advisory groups, and constant contact was maintained with the United Nations country team, the Government concerned and the parties to the conflict, both during and after the visit. With regard to the legacy of his mandate, section III of his report (A/54/430) provided information on action and initiatives to protect children affected by conflicts and indicated the practices and arrangements that he hoped would remain in place. The report also identified certain actors such as the Security Council, the European Union, regional organizations, communities of faith, and non-governmental organizations, which, it was hoped, would continue that work. Above all, the recommendations at the end of the report should form the basis for a dialogue with delegations.

43. It was for the Member States to decide what should be done with the mandate of the Special Representative. His own view was that it should be of limited duration and that the objective should be to establish a critical mass of activities and arrangements at all levels with the actors involved that could be sustained indefinitely. In the past one-and-a-half years, priority had been given to working with the European Union and the European Parliament. The report detailed some of the concrete initiatives that had emerged in that context.

44. He viewed his role as one of an advocate for the protection of children, providing political and intellectual leadership, suggesting ideas and approaches to the operational agencies and non-governmental organizations, encouraging good work in the field, creating an environment favourable to political and humanitarian initiatives to resolve difficult situations, and promoting a concerted and effective approach on the part of the various actors, including UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP and WFP.

45. Quite frankly, the international community had no reason to congratulate itself on what had been achieved in the past 10 years. The situation on the ground was unbelievably appalling, particularly for children caught up in the midst of armed conflict. In actual fact, the greatest achievement over the past decade was the adoption and almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The next step was to launch an "era of application" in order to ensure the practical implementation of the Convention.

46. Sierra Leone had experienced a major setback owing to internal difficulties and the "wait and see" attitude adopted by the international community, which should have helped the Government, the democratic forces, and ECOMOG consolidate peace in the country. That had not happened and, as a result, Sierra Leone had endured an unspeakable tragedy. His office was seeking to resume work on the pilot project. In general, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, East Timor and the Democratic Republic of the Congo should remain at the centre of the international community's attention.

47. Sanctions were a crude form of punishment since those who suffered the most were the most vulnerable and the most innocent, children. He had urged the Security Council and other bodies to ensure that sanctions were organized in such a way as to allow for the protection of children. That was why he had urged the Council to incorporate humanitarian

considerations in dealing with armed conflicts, leading to the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999). The test would be whether that approach could be applied in specific situations. With regard to the impact of his activities on the work of other actors in the field, he pointed out that his office worked with the operational agencies both at the country level and at headquarters and sought to bring donors, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies together in order to make the combined effort as effective as possible.

48. In order to ensure the observance of political commitments by parties to conflicts not to recruit children, not to interfere with humanitarian ceasefires and not to attack civilian populations, the international community must work together and engage all key actors. Governments had a very important role to play in that regard in view of their influence with other Governments and insurgent groups. His office relied on the country teams to monitor the observance of commitments and to inform him about what was happening on the ground. Lastly, his office was deeply preoccupied with the situation in East Timor and was in the process of working with a new country team and operational agencies to see how best to meet the needs of the children affected by the upheaval there.

49. **Ms. Bellamy** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the Fund was actively engaged in rights-based programming. That initiative had taken some time and had involved engagement, participation, reflection, debate and field work. Mistakes had been made and lessons learned. The Fund had conducted a series of actions for disseminating information on the protection of children from sexual exploitation, children in armed conflict, the new ILO Convention, and the role of human rights treaty bodies. Training materials had been prepared for UNICEF staff, and periodic workshops and discussions had been held at the regional and country level. In negotiating UNICEF programmes with partner Governments, a holistic approach was taken to meeting all the needs of children through the perspective of children's rights.

50. The Fund also participated in activities within the broader United Nations system, for example, in setting up the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), establishing guidelines to ensure the inclusion of human rights norms. The common country assessment included human rights indicators, and UNICEF was participating in the development of human rights materials for United Nations country teams. Accordingly, the Fund had attempted to make a contribution based on its own working instruments as well as its increasing experience at the country level. Occasional difficulties arose in persuading partners to work on the basis of an integrated approach, and financing and budgeting could create problems.

51. UNICEF was working with the initiators of the World Summit for Children and had been engaged in a process of preparing for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001. It had developed assessment tools for the multiple indicator cluster survey and required the assistance of Member States to ensure that the data used were accurate so that specific lessons could be learned. That also represented an opportunity to engage Governments and the entire international community in taking the agenda for children into the twenty-first century, ensuring that the present survival agenda was completed and mobilizing global leadership in order to put the interests of children at the forefront of their efforts.

52. The Fund's Internet Web page, "Making Children Count", was designed to be an effective tool for providing accurate and useful information on general measures to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and would be an ongoing information service. In the past five or six years there had been an enormous increase in the number of conflicts in the world, placing ever greater demands on the Fund's activities. Since UNICEF had country programmes in 160 countries, it was present before, during and after conflicts and was very much engaged in policy advocacy and operations in the field. The role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General was very important in focusing public attention on particular issues in specific areas and identifying the necessary steps to be taken.

53. UNICEF had conducted a thorough survey of child mortality in Iraq and had found that there had been a deterioration in child mortality rates during the past decade, particularly in the central and southern parts of the country. Conditions were somewhat better in the north. The Fund had concluded that that situation was the result of a number of factors, including greater humanitarian assistance in the north than in the south. At the same time, there should be more of a commitment to act by the Government of Iraq itself in the central and southern areas. UNICEF had urged that a targeted nutrition programme should be put into place at an accelerated pace.

54. While sanctions were tools that the United Nations employed when it chose to do so, the Fund had urged that the impact of sanctions on children should be monitored and that humanitarian exemptions should be instituted where possible. Lastly, she agreed with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that the greatest achievement in the past 10 years had been the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the activities

undertaken in many parts of the world to implement it. The greatest challenge ahead was to bridge the gap between words and action.

55. **Ms. Calcetas-Santos** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that she had been careful while in Fiji not to comment on the case of the retired Australian businessman being held on child pornography charges (see A/54/411, para. 37) because the matter was *sub judice*; that stricture seemed less relevant before the Committee. She had cited the case in her interim report because she had felt that it, more than any other factor, had awakened people to the threat to children in Fiji. The suspect, Mr. Mutch, had been arrested after he had sent his laptop computer to Australia for repair and the repair engineer had contacted the authorities on discovering that the machine held thousands of pornographic photographs of children. She had seen some of the pictures, including those of three girls aged between 8 and 11, whom Mr. Mutch had had in his custody; they were eloquent evidence that he was not, as he had been described, respectable. However, because of Mr. Mutch's public persona and habit of distributing presents, even some of the parents whose children he had photographed were withdrawing charges against him. Clearly there was still a need to publicize the fact that children had rights and to emphasize that those rights should not be neglected in return for favours.

56. A lack of statistics should not be an excuse for government inaction against the sexual exploitation of children. As she constantly said, the presence of large numbers of street children, drug and alcohol abuse by children, intra-family abuse and an influx of tourists were all indicators that a country might have a child sexual exploitation problem. All those indicators were present in Fiji. While the police and non-governmental organizations might report that there were no pimps in Suva, that was because there was little foreign tourism there, so that pimping was not worthwhile. The situation seemed very different in Nandi, where there were numerous foreign visitors. She appreciated the need to protect Fiji's tourism industry and had, therefore, emphasized the fact that Mr. Mutch was a resident of the country, not a tourist. Sadly, however, when tourists were present in a country, children were often a very good trading commodity.

57. Those who questioned whether abuse within the home could extend to the commercial sexual exploitation of children should ask themselves how it was that, of two children from similar backgrounds, one would become a prostitute and the other, from a supportive family, would not. Her interviews with children had shown her that that was a common phenomenon. Given that, as Special Rapporteur, she had no resources, United Nations agencies' cooperation with her was far below the desirable level. UNHCHR was, however, beginning to take her mandate seriously. She looked forward to institutionalized, rather than the current ad hoc cooperation with UNICEF, which she viewed as her natural partner. It was because of information from UNICEF that she had made her visit to Fiji. As her interim report showed, she also sought help wherever else it might be found.

58. Concerning the importance of the Internet for her work, she referred the Committee to her 1998 report to the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1998/101). The greatest achievement of her work to date was the growing realization worldwide that children had rights. Her greatest challenge for the future was to instil awareness that those rights could not be enjoyed unless conditions were created for that.

59. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) assured Mr. Otunnu that her country was wholeheartedly in favour of his noble task and goals and was ready to contribute as far as it could to their fulfilment. Observing that he had referred to the importance of preserving local values, she asked how traditions could be integrated into children's education from the earliest stages so that they grew up in a spirit of respect for their societies and peace.

60. **Ms. de Armas Garcia** (Cuba) said that she had great sympathy with Mr. Otunnu's remarks concerning the importance of his mandate. Her Government was deeply attached to the promotion of children's welfare wherever their situation and had shown what could be done both nationally and internationally in that regard. It was regrettable that Mr. Otunnu's report had not been distributed in time for the detailed study and intergovernmental decisions that its contents warranted. Some aspects of the report should, for example, be discussed in other forums besides the Committee.

61. Regarding the references in the report to the role of the Security Council and to Council resolution 1261 (1999), it should be noted that the Council had a mandate to preserve international peace and security and prevent war. Humanitarian issues, especially the protection of children, were essentially matters for the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, and it was there that action on them should start. In fact, protecting children against the effects of armed conflict, hunger, underdevelopment and exploitation was vital for the future of the world and a task in which every part of the United Nations system and the international community should participate within the limits of its mandate.

62. **Mr. Sergiwa** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, deeply committed though Mr. Otunnu clearly was to preventing the involvement of children in armed conflicts, the scale of such involvement was still horrifying. What did Mr. Otunnu think should be done to persuade States to do their utmost to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and what was being done to rehabilitate former such soldiers?

63. **Monsignor Reinert** (Observer for the Holy See) asked Ms. Calcetas-Santos whether her report to the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights would show how protection of the family could be a way of preventing child exploitation.

64. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) congratulated Mr. Otunnu on his efforts to bring to the fore the sad situation of children in armed conflicts. He agreed that there was a need to focus on the breakdown of value systems as a factor of that situation. As the representative of a country where traditional family values were strong and revered, he was greatly concerned by the reference in paragraph 2 of Ms. Calcetas-Santos' report to the catalytic role of the family in child sexual exploitation. Did Ms. Calcetas-Santos think that the family as an institution contributed towards such exploitation or was it the breakdown of the family that was the cause? He would also like clarification concerning the reference in paragraph 40 of the report to reluctance to protest about sexual abuse of children because of a fear of losing income.

65. **Mr. Al-Humaimidi** (Iraq) said that the main speakers' statements had all demonstrated their commitment to children's rights. Mr. Otunnu's efforts to alert the international community to the plight of children in armed conflicts were highly laudable, but his task was extremely difficult. His report showed clearly how children suffered in countries on which sanctions had been imposed. Iraq had deep respect for Ms. Bellamy and her work and was eager to see follow-up to her visits and the understanding she had demonstrated of sanctions' impact on children. If children's health was better in northern Iraq than in the other parts of the country, it was because that area, being under the control of foreign Powers, was not blockaded. With regard to central and southern Iraq, the recent assertion to the Security Council that food and medical supplies intended for those areas were being stockpiled rather than distributed was false and the result of a misunderstanding concerning the operation of the various delivery contracts involved.

66. **Mr. Otunnu** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said, with reference to the statement by the representative of the Sudan, that he believed very firmly that there were two pillars of protection for children in the event of armed conflict: universal norms and local standards. In the latter case, it was important to distinguish between bad traditions, which did not adequately protect children's rights and positive traditions, which did. There were recent examples from various parts of the world of decisions by parties in conflict with each other to revise traditions that did not correspond to modern human rights standards.

67. He agreed with the representative of Cuba that protecting children was a matter for numerous bodies, including, for example, the Third Committee and the Economic and Social Council. He was sure, however, that the representative of Cuba would also agree that the Security Council, like other organs, had a role to play when peace and security were disrupted. Regarding the question from the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as to what was needed to halt recruitment of child soldiers, he drew attention to the importance of addressing what he had termed in paragraphs 17 to 26 of his report the "many faces" of children's suffering as a result of armed conflict. As for ending recruitment of children, he pursued the three-pronged approach outlined in paragraph 45 of his report.

68. **Ms. Bellamy** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to address the Committee and subscribed to Mr. Somavia's comments concerning the Committee's importance. She urged the members of the Committee to participate, by action in the Committee and in their home countries, in meeting the common challenge of ensuring that, instead of dying from armed conflicts and AIDS, children enjoyed their rights to survive, to grow and to fulfil their potential.

69. **Ms. Calcetas-Santos** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) assured the representative of Pakistan that, in referring to the link between the home environment and children's vulnerability to prostitution and pornography, she had had in mind abusive homes, not homes in general. The horrors to which parental abuse of children could lead could perhaps be judged from the fact that one child prostitute had told her that she considered involvement in commercial sex preferable to life in her family, where she had been sexually abused without any improvement in her level of living. States should, however, reflect carefully on how to protect children when abuse by a parent was detected: too often the reaction was to place the child in an institution, thereby adding to the burden of abuse the quadruple punishment of separation from the caring parent, the siblings, the physical home and the familiar wider environment.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.